



Arizona Department of Public Safety

- **For Immediate Release** -
September 18, 2008

Investigation by detectives from the Counter Narcotics Alliance and the Department of Public Safety leads to the Rescue of 18 Undocumented Aliens being held in inhumane conditions, to include an underage victim who was sexually assaulted.

On September 15, 2008, Detectives from the Counter Narcotics Alliance, a multi-agency drug task force operating in Pima County, with the assistance of uniformed Tucson Police Officers, conducted a surveillance operation on a suspected marijuana stash house. Two rental vehicles were stopped leaving the residence, resulting in the detention of four undocumented aliens and a suspected human smuggler.

Further investigation revealed that the suspects were human smugglers and up to "10 additional undocumented aliens were still in the house." Attempts to contact the occupants of the drop house were unsuccessful.

Detectives from the Pima/Santa Cruz Investigations Squad (who specialize in human smuggling and associated money laundering) were called out to assist. Detectives obtained a search warrant for the residence. A total of 22 undocumented aliens (18 victims, 4 co-conspirators) were found in the house, to include two females ages 17 and 27 who were found to have been sexually assaulted (Tucson Police Department was notified and took disposition of the sexual assault victims and suspects). The people were kept in the residence with minimal facilities. The residence was unfurnished and hot because the air conditioner was kept off by the smugglers. Based on interviews, the detectives learned that minimal food (bologna and bread only once a day) was provided to the undocumented aliens. One of the undocumented aliens claimed to have not been fed for 2 to 3 days. Medical assistance was rendered to all of the victims. U.S. Border Patrol provided transportation of the group to a location where the interviews could be conducted.

As a result of the information obtained from the interviews, 2 are being held as material witnesses, 5 remain in the federal custody of the Border Patrol awaiting review by the U.S. Attorney General's Office. The Office of the Arizona State Attorney General is pursuing 18 counts of human smuggling and 4 counts of money laundering against the one United States citizen. Three of the five in custody transported the undocumented aliens from the international border to Tucson. The fourth transported the undocumented aliens from Tucson to the destination of Atlanta, Chicago and New York. The fifth was identified as the smuggler, a U.S. Citizen who was running the stash house.

Press Inquiries:

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Note: A separate will contain three photographs of the residence interior.
End

The Arizona Department of Public Safety is proud to be of assistance to the Counter Narcotics Alliance in the joint effort to dismantle and disrupt the criminal organizations that maintain criminal enterprises which affect the citizens of Arizona. The primary goal of the multi-agency law enforcement efforts is to make the communities in Arizona and across the United States safer places to live.

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